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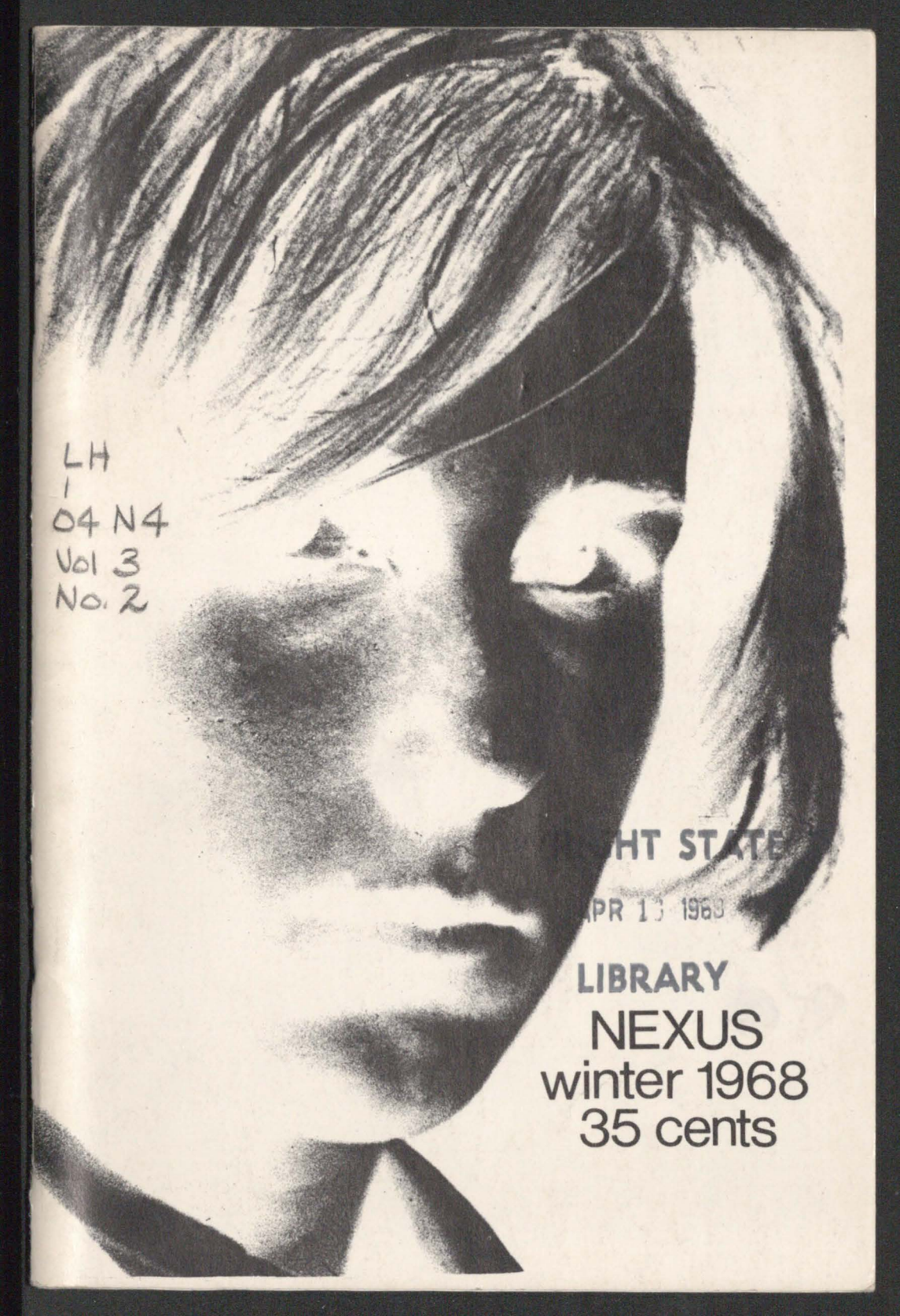


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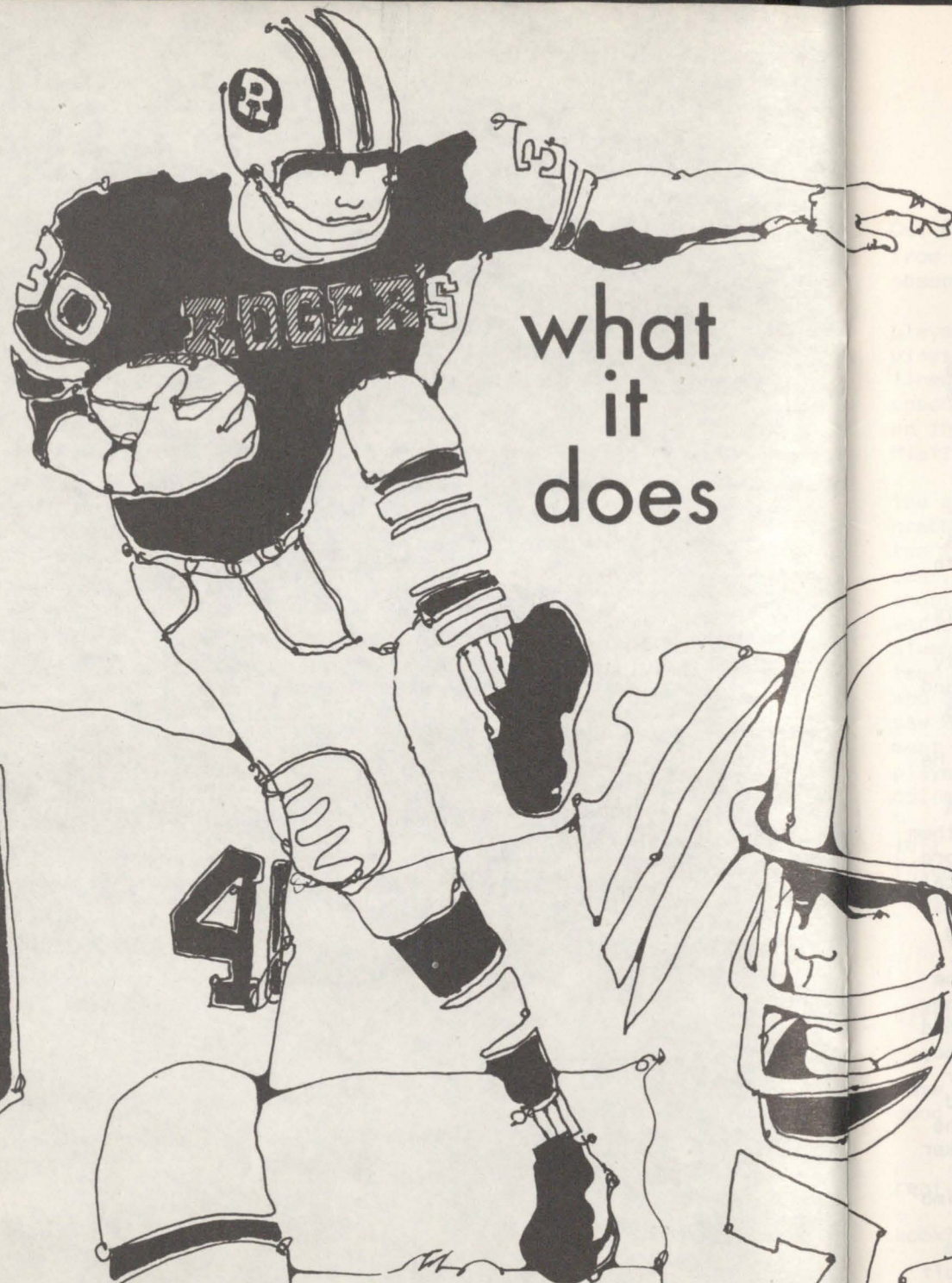


Prose

- 4 What in Does - Duke O'Reilly
- 13 That Day - Claire March
- 20 The Wheel - Pedro Cohen
- 35 Willie-Lee - Rachel Starosky

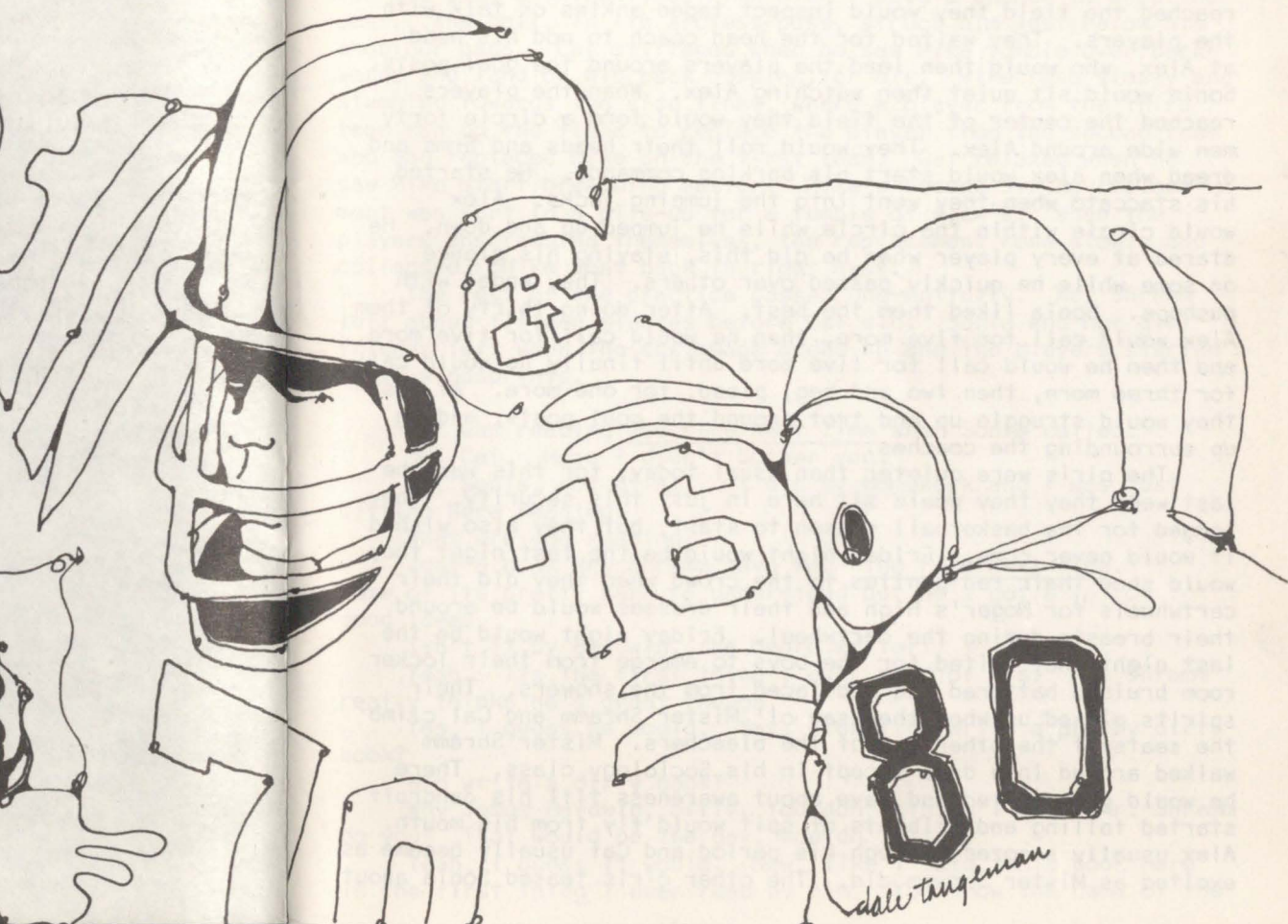
Poetry

- 10 Faces - Margaret Harrison
- 28 Variations on a Jimmy Rushing Performance
-Pedro Cohen
- 30 Confessional - Eugene Buechele
- 31 Its the Next Best Thing - Eugene Buechele
- 32 Detroit, from the Lake - Earl Butler
- 41 Breathing the Fun it Was - Ruth Stewart
- 43 After Yeats in Late Autumn - Margaret Harrison
- 44 Untitled - Ruth Stewart



what
it
does

The practice field is about as bright as a little candle. The high school is lit up with lights of crimson and white. It was a night of the class of 1950. The players were lined up on the field. They were clean white jerseys and pants. The jerseys had "Rogers" in five letters across the front. Some and the girls' friends sat at the end of the bleachers. They giggled and laughed but mostly they just watched. The coaches all sat at the same end of the field. The players were lined up on the field. They were clean white jerseys and pants. The jerseys had "Rogers" in five letters across the front. Some and the girls' friends sat at the end of the bleachers. They giggled and laughed but mostly they just watched. The coaches all sat at the same end of the field.



The practice field lay about an eighth of a mile behind the high school. It was patched with tufts of crabgrass and portions of bare dirt. They let the classes out at three-fifteen. It wasn't until three thirty-five or three-forty that the players arrived on the field. They wore clean white jerseys and pants. The jerseys had "Roger's" in blue letters across the front. Sonia and her girl friends sat at the far end of the bleachers. They giggled and laughed but mostly they just watched. The coaches, all four of them came out together. Walking fast, talking, and leafing through their clip boards. The players would throw balls back and forth or else attack the sleds and tackling dummies. When the coaches reached the field they would inspect taped ankles or talk with the players. They waited for the head coach to nod his head at Alex, who would then lead the players around the goal posts. Sonia would sit quiet then watching Alex. When the players reached the center of the field they would form a circle forty men wide around Alex. They would roll their heads and arms and dread when Alex would start his barking commands. He started his staccato when they went into the jumping jacks. Alex would circle within the circle while he jumped up and down. He stared at every player when he did this, staying his glance on some while he quickly passed over others. They ended with pushups. Sonia liked them the best. After doing thirty of them Alex would call for five more, then he would call for five more, and then he would call for five more until finally he would call for three more, then two and beg, plead, for one more. At last they would struggle up and trot around the goal posts, ending up surrounding the coaches.

The girls were quieter than usual today, for this was the last week they they would sit here in just this security. They longed for the basketball season to start, but they also wished it would never come. Friday night would be the last night they would show their red panties to the crowd when they did their cartwheels for Roger's High and their dresses would be around their breasts during the cartwheel. Friday night would be the last night they waited for the boys to emerge from their locker room bruised battered and red-faced from the showers. Their spirits picked up when they saw ol' Mister Shramm and Cal climb the seats at the other end of the bleachers. Mister Shramm walked around in a daze except in his Sociology class. There he would get excited and rave about awareness till his dandruff started falling and driblets of spit would fly from his mouth. Alex usually snoozed through his period and Cal usually became as excited as Mister Shramm did. The other girls teased Sonia about

Cal because she dated him before Alex transferred to Roger's from down state. Cal sat quietly just nodding to Mister Shramm's observations.

The girls turned their attention to the field when the players left the sleds and tackling dummies and started running plays. The head coach, Alex, and the rest of the first team lined up on one side of the scrimmage line while the other three coaches and the second and third teams and the scrubs gathered on the other side of the line. The second team ran plays that Plattsburg would use Friday night.

Mike Bell dropped one of Alex's passes, causing a stir from the girls. The first team ran the same play again and Mike Bell grabbed at the ball but it slipped from his grasp. When they ran the play a third time, Mike didn't have a chance to drop the pass. The ball, in its arcless pass, struck him just below his shoulder pads. Cal stiffened when he saw Mike tumble over backwards and land on his back gasping for air. Mike rose slowly and stumbled towards the side lines, where a player from the third team ran on the field to replace the player from the second team who had replaced Mike on the first team. Cal relaxed when he saw Mike start breathing easier. Mike's second string replacement was hurt in a pile-up for a fumble of Alex's. When the players unscrambled themselves, the replacement rose slowly and collapsed. Mike went back in right away.

The rest of the practice passed uneventfully. Mr. Shramm left about fifteen minutes before Cal did. Sonia and her girl friends left when the scrimmage broke up and the players started their windsprints.

Cal was reading The Fire Next Time when Sonia called. "Hi Cal. Hope I didn't bother you."

No, Sonia, not at all. I did my homework and I was just sitting here reading.

What are you reading?

Just a book Mr. Shramm gave me. The Fire Next Time.

Some of its pretty hard to understand but he's got a lot of good ideas.

Isn't it by Baldwin, the Negro writer?

Yeah. Its the first thing I ever read of his. Mr. Shramm really thinks he's great though.

Yes, I guess he would. Say, didn't he write a pretty dirty book?

Who write a dirty book?

Why James Baldwin, Silly, You don't think I meant Mr. Shramm do you? That would be the day, wouldn't it?

Yeah, I guess it would. Naw, like I said, this book here is the first thing I ever read by him. You know the name of the

made All-American at State. Probably be all-Pro right now for the Birds. Yeah, Alex, it sure was a shame.

Hey, Mike, you remember the Plattsburg game? Remember I hit you for two TD's. and I ran for two others. One for forty-seven yards. Remember that. Boy, we were really great then weren't we? My Dad still has all my old clippings. Say, why don't you drop around some time, Mike, and we'll go through some of my old stuff. You know, for old times' sake.

Mike rubbed his chest and said, sure Alex, sure. I'm just a little busy right now. He was very glad to see his girl open the door.

Anytime, Alex, anytime. Maybe next week. Just for old times sake.

Yeah, anytime, Mike, just for old times sake. Read my clippings from the Plattsburg game. Yeah, have a few beers. Be good now, ha ha.

It was near eleven and Alex was running out of money. He had in fact about enough for two more drinks when Mr. Shramm came in.

Well, if it aint my old home room teacher, Mister Shramm. How are you?

Mr. Shramm bought several drinks and was beginning to get anxious over the money he was spending and was beginning to tire of Alex.

Yes sir, Mister Shramm, we sure had some fine times back then didn't we?

Mister Shramm put his hand on Alex's thigh. Yes, my boy, we sure did have some good times. Would you care for another drink?

Why, I don't mind if I do. Say, remember the Plattsburg game.....

The picture window looked out on the terrace that faced the highway. The bus would arrive soon and the children would come scramblin and ramblin towards the house. The other wives had finished their coffee or were having one last cup. The wife stood and looked out on the terrace and onto the road. She couldn't quite believe the events of the last few days. Her husband coming home drunk in a Company car, its siren screaming and light flashing. The pride when the company scion came over here in this very house and had stayed for dinner. Left Europe to congratulate her husband and gave him a personal check above and over what the company would give him. And then last night at the awards dinner. Like her husband said, Honey, there's more brains under this roof than any other single place in the world.

And the pride she felt when they gave HER HUSBAND A STAND-ING OVATION. How could she describe it? How to put it into words?

The yellow bus discharged its occupants. It was three thirty-five or maybe three forty and the little boy who led the other children wore white levis and a white sweatshirt.

And yes, yes, oh yes it was, she thought as she ran to meet the boy.

Yes, Cal! YES, CAL JUNIOR! She took the boy and hugged him to her.

It was almost as if your mother had red panties on once again. And yes, she (your mother) was doing a cartwheel and showing, showing, her red panties to the crowd. Yes, oh yes it was!!

-Duke O'Reilly-

Faces

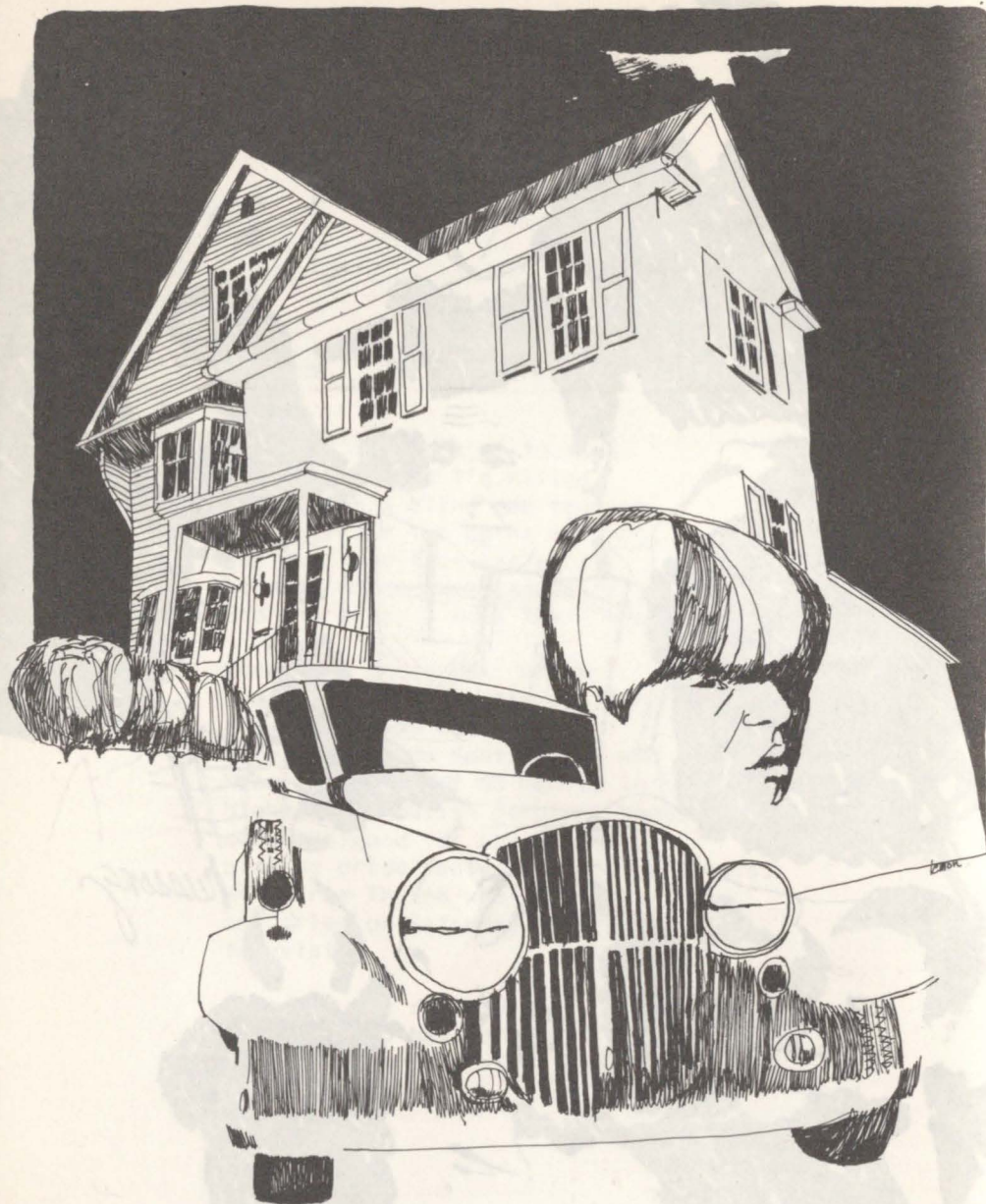
Blind in the dark, I touched
the yellow face I'd killed.
Touched as a blind man touches,
or a girl in the dark: for who.
And God, the face was warm
beneath scare-sweat or tears
and the eyes, I knew their look.

Knew from Uncle Max, drunk
and dull with pain the day Aunt Helen left.
Knew from Anne Marie
growing up from Santa Claus and Christ.
Knew from "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good
Night," old owlish petulant heads
desovereigned for new dauphins
pissing pridelessly in pastel blankets.
Knew from Thelma who is thirty-five
and cries on Saturday nights watching
television.

Blind in the dark, I pray
to a God who has no face:
Give us a bomb to blast a wall of mist.

-Margaret Harrison-





That Day

It was still dark when Davy awoke, and he lay for awhile in the thick darkness without moving, listening to the creaking night sounds of the old house. Beside him in the high old bed, his four year old brother sprawled in defenseless sleep. Across the hall, the baby stirred in his crib. Somewhere outside a dog barked fitfully, bored with the night. Otherwise the house was silent.

Davy, now fully awake, shivered in the freshening breeze and rolled toward his brother for warmth; but he, spread-eagled across the bed and entangled solidly in the sheet, offered no comfort. Rolling himself into a ball, Davy huddled periously near the edge of the bed, and shut his eyes against the loneliness of the night. Now the darkness became velvety, and against the curtain of his eyelids, he projected the events of the coming day. He saw himself in the car beside his grandfather, and the landscape flowed past like cool honey until they were suddenly at the farm. Here, the image faltered, and they stood detached in a misty nowhere, yet together. When he opened his eyes again, the room was still in darkness, but the window was now grey with light. His day was about to begin.

As soon as the room was no longer shadowy, he got quietly out of bed, being careful not to wake Tad. He took off his pajamas, folded them neatly, and put them under his pillow, then stood naked, his skinny little body straight and taut. He padded silently to his dresser and selected the clothes he would wear, arranging them carefully on the chair. He had chosen khaki shorts, pale blue shirt and white socks. He worked methodically, his little hands somewhat clumsy with the buttons of the shirt, yet patient. When he had pulled on the white socks, he sat for a moment considering the choice of the shoes he would wear. He tentatively picked the canvas ones; but reconsidering, he reached instead far back in the closet for his hiking boots. He loved wearing these: the leather soft and padded, yet firm around his ankles, and the stout thongs laced snugly and easily. He had some difficulty tying them, but he managed a passable knot and stood up to admire them. His thin little legs rose from the high tops ludicrously, giving him the look of a gangling young crane. Satisfied with what he saw, he tip-toed to the door, up the hall, and down the stairs, walking lightly in order to muffle the sound of his boots.

At the foot of the stairs, he listened for sounds of arousal. A provisional silence held. He made his way into the kitchen, now quite light with the first pale fingers of sun. He crossed to the window and looked out, fearful that it might show some signs of rain. His grandfather had said they would not go if it rained. It did not look like rain.

Now that he was up, he felt his excitement building, and he

waited impatiently for his grandfather to come down. He heard water running through the pipes, and soon his grandfather was in the kitchen. "Well, now Davy," he said, "Up and dressed already?" Davy nodded, pleased. He continued, "Let's have our breakfast and get started," and he went directly to the cupboard for the cereal and poured it into two large bowls. He added sugar and cream and set one bowl before Davy. Davy felt a wave of revulsion for the pale blobs wallowing in the milk, but he ate slowly without protest. "We'll have coffee on the way," his grandfather said. They rinsed their bowls in the sink, filled a container with water, and went cautiously through the back door to the garage. Davy climbed in beside his grandfather and stared solemnly out the window as they passed through the stale, empty streets before reaching the highway. They rode smoothly in intimate silence. Davy thought of his younger brothers and sister: sturdy Tad, his features still softly babyish, Amy, blonde and dainty, and the seductive baby, fat and golden. They would be up soon, clamoring and demanding. He wondered if they would miss him. He broke the silence abruptly. "Grandfather, do you like me?" His grandfather turned his head briefly to look curiously at him. "Now what brought that on? Of course your grandmother and I love all of you children, and we're glad that you and Tad and Amy and the baby and mother are here for a visit. Okay, Boy?" Davy turned back to the window, and Grandfather shifted slightly in his seat, saying nothing more.

The sun was now well up in a cloudless sky, and Davy wondered if they would stop soon. As if he had read Davy's thoughts, Grandfather slowed at sight of the diner far down the road. "Well, Davy, how about that coffee now?" They pulled in the entrance of the diner. It was a trucker's stop and the lot was crowded with the big transports. They found places at the counter between two drivers. Except for the waitresses, there were no women in the diner. Grandfather ordered coffee for two, and when it came drank his in one long draft. Then taking the empty cup, he poured half of Davy's coffee into it, added cream and sugar and pushed it toward Davy. Davy raised the cup to his lips, savoring its faintly bitter taste. He held it tightly and carefully, pausing to look up and down the long shiny counter. The coffee steamed in the cups setting before the men. A faint smile appeared on his five-year old face.

Leaving the diner, they became locked in a long line of trucks, Davy could feel his grandfather's impatience mounting as they snaked along the highway. The sun had risen higher, and shimmering heat waves began to appear before them. Davy was relieved when at last they turned onto a narrow road spread with coarse rock. He could feel the tension flow from his grandfather as the car settled into the smooth ruts. The tires made crunching sounds as they passed over the road. They turned sharply now into a narrow lane, its mouth half hidden by dense foliage. Almost at once they were upon the house. It stood alone, like a decaying tooth, a part of it

black and crumbling, the rest still solid and alive as though its roots refused to relinquish their hold in the jaws of the earth. It had been ravished by long past fires, set by vandals.

This was the Farm, now a game preserve, with only a few of its fields in cultivation. In a distant field, a tenant farmer rode his tractor through thick, young corn. Davy could barely see his hat above the green stalks, and only an occasional glimpse of the yellow tractor. Adjacent to this was a field of tomatoes. The sprawling vines had spread lushly, almost obliterating the rows which appeared now and then in thin bald spots daubed with the bursting red fruit. Apart from this, the greenness stretched for miles, broken only by patchy roads curving erratically through the solid wild growth.

Davy walked with his grandfather toward the fields, turning into the road that led to the tomatoes. It was difficult to avoid stepping on the vines and their fruit, and Davy could feel them squash beneath his boots. Grandfather moved on, unmindful of Davy floundering behind him, and was soon some distance ahead. As he fell farther and farther behind, Davy struggled to catch up, careless of where he stepped. He tripped and fell heavily. At that moment, his grandfather paused to look back. Annoyance colored his voice as he shouted: "David, perhaps you had best wait for me back at the house. You're too slow." Davy scrambled up and obediently turned toward the house, scuffing his boots into the dusty mounds as he trudged alone away from his grandfather.

When he reached the house, he sat gingerly on the rotting steps. He saw his grandfather deep in the field now, and watched as he went further and further away, stopping now and then to inspect something of interest.

Davy sat upright, unwilling to look at the vacant house behind. He got up from the step and wandered toward the field of tomatoes again. Their bright color attracted him, and dispelled some of the uneasiness he had felt when he was near the house. They reminded him of lighted Christmas balls, gay and warm. He sat down on a bare spot, and traced a line in the sandy soil with his fingers. An ant ran silently over his hand, then dived into an anthill, followed by a few trembling grains of sand. The tremulous flutings of birds and the droning of the insects about the rotting fruit only intensified the stillness. He heard a faint shout far below; his grandfather, now small in the distance, was calling to the man on the tractor. Their voices floated up to Davy, disembodied and indistinguishable. The awful isolation jelled and intensified. He stumbled up, fear making his legs wobbly, so that he was unable to run. He wanted to reach his grandfather and the man on the tractor, but the vines held him back. He could see them clearly now, their tenacious arms holding ripe clusters of tomatoes spilling and rotting on the ground where they lay in waste. He reached for one, pulling it from the vine. It felt warm.

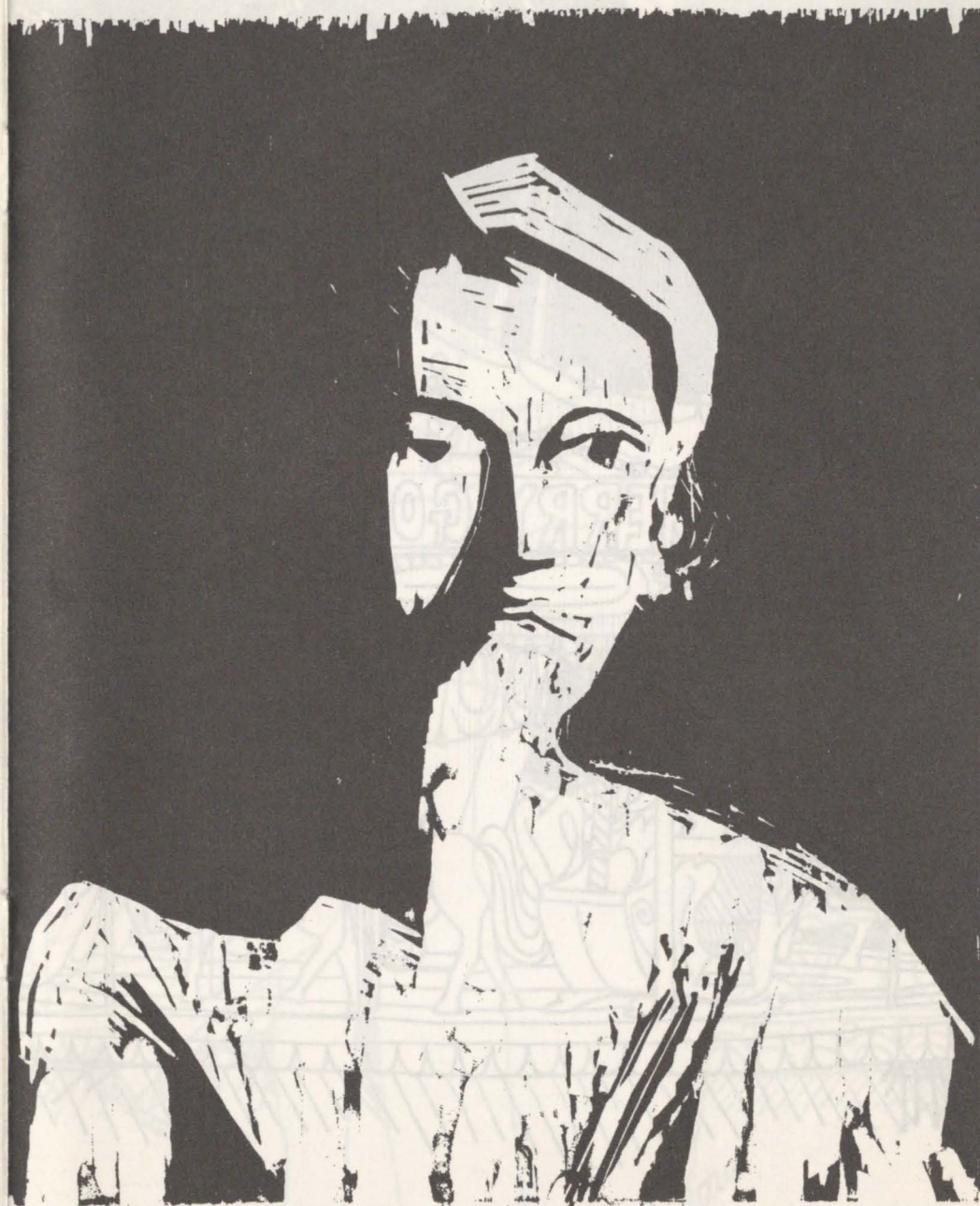
and solid in his hands, and he rubbed it gently, removing the dusty film of earth. It glowed brightly. He was at once enchanted, and his apprehension faded as he cradled the warm flesh of the little red ball. He laid it carefully aside, out of reach, so that he would not mash it unknowingly. He chose others, picking only the roundest and reddest. He liked the small ones best because they fit into his hands and made him think of rubber balls. Handling them gently, he made pyramids of them, and the bright red piles grew. As he worked, he thought of how pleased his grandfather would be when he returned and saw them. He thought of showing them when they reached home. He smiled as he bent over the vines.

He was by now both hot and thirsty, but the water had been left in the car, and Grandfather was still far up field. He sat down to wait, reluctant to leave the shiny mounds of fruit. His hunger had returned, and he thought of lunch. He polished one of the tomatoes on his shorts and bit into it. The warm, red juice gushed, staining his shirt and shorts, and ran down his legs and into his shoes. Its sweet tangy taste assuaged his thirst momentarily. He sat relaxed, waiting.

Soon he saw his grandfather approaching, stepping cautiously down the rows of vines. He stopped several feet from Davy, and wiped his sweating face with a large blue bandana. Davy rose expectantly, eager to show his treasure. "Look, Grandfather! see what I've picked for us." His grandfather stepped nearer, his eyes travelling over the neatly stacked tomatoes. He bent to examine one, holding it lightly in his hand. He straightened, still holding the tomato in his hand, rolling it slightly between his fingers. He glanced at it again, then tossed it matter-of-factly aside. Davy followed its course with his eyes, and heard it drop with a soft plop. He could not take his eyes from it. He heard his grandfather say cheerfully, "These are too small, Davy. They're not worth hauling home. I'll get the basket and pick some nice big ones."

They rode home in silence save for the ball game which blared through the radio. When they reached home, Davy was asleep. When the car came to a stop, he woke at once, and leaped from it, running to the house. In the kitchen, his grandmother and mother were preparing supper. They turned to greet him, surprise in their faces. "Have a good time, Davy?" they asked. He pushed by them, racing for the stairs. He reached his room just as his grandfather entered the kitchen with the tomatoes, piled high in the basket. "What's wrong with Davy?", he heard his mother say. He did not wait for Grandfather's reply. He shut the door softly and leaned against it. He heard the children beneath his window playing in the sand box. He looked around the room, now tidy, the bed smooth under its spread. He fell to his knees beside it, reached under and pulled out the heavy box. He opened it and removed the metal soldiers, aligning them smartly on the hard, varnished floor.

-Claire March-





The Wheel



The day had been dreary. Hung with billowing dirty-grey clouds, it has laid itself over the world as if it were purposely depressing the inhabitants below, stifling them with darkness, and an oppressive heat, a resinous quilt. But night came, and as though it were a greater power than the day, shook off the stifling clouds, as one might shake off the muddled thoughts of confusion, and allowed the lucid precision of a million stars to be displayed. Also, as if in apology for the tyranny of its sister, the night bestowed a cooling breeze. A peace offering that was readily accepted. It blew down to earth, aimless, drifting here, then there, like one searching. It came upon the carnival, and as if to show that even the wind cannot resist such magic, descended pell-mell into that wonderous place; whipping through and over the many fantastic sights; the tents of freaks, the booths of games, the multi-colored spinning rides. The experience seemed to give the wind strength, made it bolder, flapping at the canvas tent-doors, lifting the skirts of raucous women, blowing frail slips of paper round and round. Then as the novelty of the first touch wore off, it became complacent and leisurely, content with a calm enjoyment, and it quieted to a murmur.

The boy and girl stood underneath the blinking cotton-candy sign and licked their fingers. They worked at the task with a singular intensity, the red pulp of their tongues whipping and lashing at the sweetened digits, as if each lick represented something valuable, something not to be wasted. In this fashion the desirable deposits were soon exhausted, leaving only a bothersome residue, to be rubbed off with a light brushing against the side of the shirt. The boy was obviously uncomfortable, his fingers twisting and turning in an effort to friction away the irritant. The girl seemed more resigned, standing easily at his elbow, waiting....

"That was good Peter," she said, in a tone that spoke of an impatient desire to move on to other, more exciting things.

"Yeah. You want some more?"

"No." She punctuated her refusal with a vigorous head movement, causing her (soft-ochre) hair to bounce against her pale face. Her mouth screwed slightly as she twisted her lips into a half-pout. "I want to go on some rides." The voice of a little girl.

He stared at the pretty face, as fascinated as he had been the first time, with the peculiar creases that connected her jaw and cheek bones. Deep twin crescents, so deep one could almost plunge down their fleshy walls. He knew that she was waiting for him to react, expecting his usual irrational outburst, the epithetic fury over which he had so little control. How much he

was like his father. The thought was without pride. Calmly, "Look Suzy, I told you before, I'm not going on any goddamn rides. So Don't start up now." He tried to sound determined.

She shrugged condescendingly, as if it was beyond her control.

"Come on, lets go see what's down there." Peter pointed towards the dirt path that led down the midway, and began striding in that direction. He could sense her eyes on his retreating back, mocking him. For as much as he was like his father, to that degree Suzy was unlike his mother. Not passive. Not acquiescent. Not afraid to fight, to battle. He wondered if that was what killed his mother. If she felt that death was like all other things, not worth fighting.

He had known the request for rides would come again. Even when they had sat on her rose-covered couch, close together, planning the carnival night, and she, with obvious regret, had given way to his demands that rides be left off the schedule; even then he had known that the subject was not dead, that it would poke its tense form to the surface again. It was a challenge she would (or could) not let pass.

Running, she came to his side, and taking his arm, laid her blonde hair on his shoulder. "Let's go in the spooky house." She swung his arm back and forth.

"Okay." He kissed her cheek. "Where is it?" He looked around, the booths and signs seemed to blend into a sameness of mixing running colors and lights. (He and his father, once, walking the paper covered carnival gliding from magical place to magical place, swimming through popcorn oceans)

"HEY, there's a good looking couple. Come on sport, try your luck. Win the little lady a prize to remember you by. Right over here."

Peter turned at the voice and saw a young greasy-haired barker smiling their way. Below the smile (the wooden expression of a puppet), an arm extended, clutching three baseballs, held in offering.

"Oh please Peter. Win me a prize to remember you by."

He nodded. They approached the stand, and he silently slid a quarter across the wooden surface, receiving in return three dirty and scuffed balls. He wondered how many times they had been thrown. How many times with success.

Up close, Peter could see that the boy behind the counter was no older than he. His uniform was an apron, stained and wrinkled, and a ridiculous derby which jutted off his pock-marked face. He opened his mouth to speak and exposed the rotten remainder of what once may have been white teeth. "Okay, sport. Just a quarter an ya can take home one of these great prizes. Alright! Here he goes folks. Watch how easy it is to beat the bottles."

Peter stood, facing the targets, a pyramid of ivory-white bottles, and took a deep breath. It seemed strange that the bottles were so white. Out of place. He was aware of the people watching, and of Suzy, close by. He gripped the ball tight around the seams and peered steadily out of his blue eyes at the three milk containers, cocked his wrist and rocked down hard, sending the white sphere speeding. It crashed into the right bottom bottle and dumped them all over, one falling off the table. "Got to knock 'em all the way off sport," he heard the rotten tooth yelling, as much at the crowd as at him. He felt a kind of euphoria at so much success on the first throw. The second ball hit squarely, sending a single bottle flying off the brown wooden case. He looked at Suzy and smiled confidently. Strong. Sure. (His father, standing tall, his big hand smothering the tiny horsehide orb, saying pick your prize boy, this ones coming home..)

His arm snapped, body bent like a Greek discus heaver, and from the corner of his eye he watched the ball take off in a strong arc, passing over the lonely bottle by four feet, smacking into the dark purple backdrop, falling to the floor, rolling, bouncing on a clump of earth, and then dead.

The crowd laughed and chuckled and smiled and the barker, his face split by an idiotic grin, said "Nice try sport, Go again?"

Peter grabbed Suzy's arm and started walking away quickly, feeling the pale red stain that was creeping up his neck.

"Hey", she protested, "where we going? Why don't you let me try once?"

"Come on. I'm sorry. I'll win you something someplace else." And he hastened his pace. (sorry son can't hit 'em all)

"Well quit pulling on me. What's the matter with you? Are you going to get moody again?"

"Look," he spit out the words, "I said I was sorry, now just don't bug me. Okay."

"You're just mad because you couldn't hit the stupid bottle. Anything doesn't go your way, you get moody. You make me sick." She had balked against his tugging and was stopped still in the center of the road. Her anger, her face seemed to blink like the lights surrounding them.

"Listen, I didn't want to come to this goddamn place anyway. It was your idea, so don't get bitchy with me."

"Don't call me names! You big baby, you better not cry or your madras will bleed." She laughed (christ you'll cry yourself to death)

"Come on, we're going home."

"Oh, cut it out. Why do you have to act that way?" Her tone was sweeter now, patronizing. She touched his hand with the tips of her fingers.

He gave in. He didn't fight it; he knew that it come eventually. "I'm sorry." He put his arms around her and kissed the ridge of her jawbone. "I'm sorry", he repeated.

"Okay baby. Let's go to the spook house. I want to be scared to death." She had on her little girl voice again.

Holding hands they ran across the road towards the long line of tents that decorated the side of the midway. Each were painted brightly, in descriptive caricatures of the fantastic adventures that waited inside for everyone to be thoroughly thrilled, a marvelous memory to take home.

They came to the spook house. He could see, issuing from an orange door, a group of laughing squealing kids, each seemed to be trying to outlaugh the others, as if to say "I was the most thrilled, I was the most scared."

To the other side, a black door. Set, gapingly, in the mouth of an iridescent skull that was painted imperiously on the front wall. Peter was suddenly possessed by the most certain conviction that if he entered the mouth it would destroy him. He had the absurdly repulsing vision of being trapped by tightened lips, grabbed by a curling tongue and thrown down a slimy larynx. Then plunged into the stomach-pit, there to be digested, enzymed to death, transmuted into a bileous substance, and finally defecated through the creaking cogs of a mechanized rectum.

He looked, in fear, at the girl; as though there was perhaps yet time. Time to run. But her face, its expression dissipated all hope. He was committed. Inexorably.

He paid the stumpy lady in the booth, and running, as one running to his death, pulled Suzy swiftly up the steps, threw the tickets at the half-seen man, and flung their bodies through the swinging doors. It was at once dark and deafening. Noises, screams, shrieks, phantasmic voices hurled their frightening decibels at the two intruders. He felt chilled, cold. He could hear Suzy yelping with childlike delight. A few steps and the floor became a treadmill, sending them spinning in a cyclic pattern. He became dizzy and clutched for something concrete, some support. His ears rang and the motion of the turning wheel began to spin his stomach. Eyes shut, he suddenly dropped into an endless vortex of infinite sound and movement, as though he were caught in the center of a distorted stereophonic speaker system, clanging, clanging, ever clanging in his head. And voices from a hollow tube. (its not so much what I want, the olding woman, the olding hair, its what we need; cant see it right now, too much money/gods sake stop crying, olding tears--that tree needs climbing boy, go see to it/quit your goddamn sniveling--early dawn, the tree becoming, virescent shadows, too high, got to get off, got to get off...)

His eyes opened slowly, almost as if they were still asleep and were being commanded to awake. He was sitting in a dusty corner, he could see shapes, shadows on the wheel. They came to his corner, looming large and menacing, then gone, a racing flicker of fear. He suddenly realized he was alone, that the girl had disappeared. He called. No answer. A few yards away the vague

outline of an opening was visible. Back tight against the wall, he inched to it and with a burst of action went through. He shrieked, a hideous skeleton leaped out at him. He rushed past, becoming tangled in hanging rubber cords. Vibrant, sticky threads. He fought as if he was being attacked by a giant flagellating monster. Breaking free, he ran, for what seemed like hours, through myriad tunnels filled with myriad horrors. He ran as if he was being pursued. His footsteps reverberated, accelerating his pace. (got to get away from that tree, hide in the bushes, thorns scratch/told you no woman, can't afford, crist you cry too much, you'll cry your gutless self to death/hand bleeding, the red running, dripping on the pants. Got to stop it, got to stop it)

The end. The end. He could see the door, the way outside. Somehow he had ascended. There was a slide, shining metal, stretching down to a mattress bottom. He leapt joyfully onto its surface. The cushions came like a velvet cloud and he rolled across its comforting form. Off, and he stumbled to the door, pushing through, and down the steps to the ground.

Suzy found him. He was leaning, still shaken by what had just occurred, against the side of a booth selling cheap china. "What happened to you?" Her voice showed little concern, as though she knew but felt disdainful to involve herself in such matters.

"Nothing. I guess we got separated someway. Come on, I don't feel too good. Let's go home." He reached for her hand.

She withheld it, looking at him spitefully. "Damn you, you never want me to have any fun." She sat down on a small green bench.

Peter turned away and looked up towards the center of the park, to where the giant roller-coaster, the bright green, blue, yellow flashing lights, the up and down horses galloping on the merry-go-round, the hundreds of people walking around open-mouthed, merged into magnetic blend. (son theres nothing that going on these rides can hurt you, but not going can hurt you a whole lot)

He looked down at the mournful girl and stooping over, kissed her softly on the cheek. "Come on, let's go on a ride."

She jumped up immediately. "You mean it?"

"Yeah." Sometimes he believed that she controlled him. That he was incapable of making a decision in opposition to her desires.

They ran into the bright-light triangle, the sounds of the area washed them like a wave. The people talking, music playing kids screaming, a barrage of noises, covered them in a dreamy blanket. He could hear above all else the toot-toot of the calliope going round and round.

"Let's go on the merry-go-round," he suggested.

"Oh no! That's a kiddy ride. Come on, let's take the roller-coaster."

"No! No! Not me. No roller-coaster."

"Oh Hell! What'd you tell me we could go on a ride for, if you're too scared to go on any?" The sound of disgust pervaded her voice. That and perhaps a tinge of mockery.

Peter fought his anger and tried to pacify her. "Listen, I'll make you a deal. Anything but the roller-coaster. That's fair."

"Alright." She looked around at the different rides. Her perusal was seemingly systematic. Each one weighed carefully, judged analytically for their probable frightening effects. Peter, looking with her, began to regret his compromise.

"Oh, the ferris wheel. I love the ferris wheel."

He twisted his fingers together. "Uh, how about something else?"

"Don't tell me you're afraid of a ferris wheel too. They don't even do anything! She shook her head in amazement.

"Goddamn it. Don't give me any of that crap. I just don't like it when it stops and you're way up on top and everybody starts rocking it."

"I won't rock it, I promise." (dont worry son, I wont rock it, its just an old wheel)

"No, I don't want to go." His voice shook a little. He thought that if she started up, that he might kill her. Take her by the heels, and dash her head over and over against the ground.

Suzy moved close to him and placing her lips against his cheek, said, "Come on now, I won't rock it. You can trust me... I promise."

He struggled, but he knew he would lose. She knew him so well. Knew when to attack, when to coddle, when to be soft. It was hopeless, as if it were by cosmic command he knew that he would resign, subserve his wants to hers.

The man who took the tickets spat tobacco juice on the metal base of the machine and locked the bar on their seat. Peter grabbed tight and steadied himself, pushing back against the rough wood, his arms straight out. (loosen up son, it wont bite you)

They had boarded one of the last cars to load so that they didn't have to hang off the top of the wheel while everyone else climbed on. The ride became quickly almost before he was ready, and with it the music. The first few times around he kept his eyes shut hard and sensed only through the wind and the lightness in his groin. (if the blood would stop, can go home, keeps dripping/shut the heel up/look boy, look down you can see the whole world)

Suzy squealed and held him tight against her breast.

The wheel went round and round, and he opened his eyes coming down, saw the red and green lights, and the people,

pointing and waving, flapping like colored windmills, a montage of motion, then turning into ants as they made their climb into the smooth circle. He laughed at their smallness and relaxed a bit, and stared out over the lights into the stars, (flicker of candles/quiet, blood stopped/quiet) and then swooping back down and the colors coming strong, blending together in a distorted rainbow. Suzy, pulling at his arm for protection. He grasp her closer to his body and settled, sinking into the spinning fluid motion, letting himself float with the wind.

Then the wheel stopped, and the fear came flying back. He contracted his chest muscles, trying to fight the panic. (too high too high, got to get off got to get off)

They were low, he could almost reach out and touch the ground. But one by one as the cars unloaded, they climbed higher and higher.

"Remember, you promised." His voice was broken. "No rocking. You got to stay completely still. Don't move at all."

"Okay, little baby." She laughed in his shoulder. (just keep cool boy, I aint going to let you fall out/what if it bleeds on the casket, the candles, stop crying stop crying)

Each time the car moved up another notch it shook, and he cringed in expectation. Suzy was nervous too, and she displayed it by her shrill laughter, echoing the sounds coming from the other passengers dotting the wheel.

They reached the summit, poised high above the crawling park, half over the front, half back; he was certain that the most gentle rock would eject him out, tumbling, smashing into the tobacco-stained earth.

The breeze swayed the car slowly back and forth. "Don't move Suzy. You promised. Don't move." A sudden gust of air caught him by surprise and his head spun in fear. (dont rock dad you promised you promised you/keep the hand in pocket, pocket, keep it there/one candle went out, its dead, light it light it)

"I won't, I won't. Its scary. Suzy, pressing into the deep darkness of his armpit. He could feel her shivering and he opened his eyes, peered down at the color-spectrum spread out in twining lines far below.

He became fixed by the beauty of the scene and leaning out to get a better view, caused the car to sway.

"Don't Peter don't.....what are you doing?" (stop it dad, dont dont dont/ dont yell anymore/light the candle, please)

"Peter" Her fingernails bit into his arm.

He laughed and threw his body back and forth, letting the movement rock him into a cozy cradle of the cool wind, his eyes picking the tiny colored figures up and throwing them missile-like into the atmosphere.

Suzy dug herself in hard at his body and her hands tightened

on the lapels of his jacket.

He laughed again; a loud shrieking laugh.

It was late, and the wind, sensing that its temporal existence was waning, flung itself into one last surge of activity. It circled the carnival grounds, touching lightly, almost carressing, the magical structures it had enjoyed all evening. Then it headed into the midway and cartwheeled itself down and down the twisting path, raising clouds of dusty figures and forms. Swirling them, spinning them, giving them shape, design, being. And as though they were alive, they began to dance, a ghostly, eerie dance. Danced to the rhythm of the wind's whispering chant. Then, as the breeze died to less and less, the shadows of dust began to die also, becoming what they were before; as if to belie the notion, the hope, that one could sustain an apparition of consequence, a spirit of substance.

-Pedro Cohen-

Variation on a Jimmy Rushing Performance of an Ellington Blues

("Come on little girl, don't you remember me,
Come on little girl, don't you remember me,
I'm the same little guy brought you from Tennessee")

The world was laid in gold
that night

back home
When you and he danced
In a bath of beams.
You flew

on velvet wings
Over silver-speckled
Trees. Then sang
Acappella
A melody of dreams
And he crowned your hair with leaves.

("You came to the city and your head got real high,
You came to the city and your head got real high,
I'm the same little guy who tried to put you wise")

Split from the hills, she
Moves
(the horns blow soft blow orange--a funky fire)
Back and forth, cha, cha,
Cha, with the sexy
Spick. While
The gimp-man imbibes
Through brassy sounds
A transmutation
of
Desire.

("She's mine, she's yours, she's somebody else's too,
She's mine, she's yours, she's somebody else's too,
I'm in love with the gal and I don't know what to do")

Now the dance is red,
He bled

for

So long
As does this cherry--
sliding across cool ice
dying

his drink--
Saved until last
Become a reason

to think
As the twisting woman
rubs hard

come-get-it
Against the world.

("I walked all night and my feet got soaking wet,
I walked all night and my feet got soaking wet,
Walked all night long and I haven't found my baby yet")

And the gimp-man
rides

half-cocked
Across the padded floor
(calliope-like)
I whistle toot-toot
to his motion
A redundant
notion
of carnal
Fantasy.

Confessional

Uncomfortable
box of sins
he knelt.
Vatican velvet voice
says "ego te absolvo."
Nonsense.
Cassocked
(small cocked)
white knight in black:
chivalrous tower of admonishment
gleams dull thin
shafts of dust-laden light
on eager souls, slack
on Canon Law dogma.

Wrestle vacillatory belief
hear mysterious
fellow-repentant muttering
synthetic sufferings--
mortal, venial--
in hell-driven low
voice.
Choice was his.

Leave; renounce
heavenly fervor
(Deuteronomous ethnics
incarcerated)
untaxable vestments.
Stay; pompously pronounced
chagrin
"Bless me, father, I have sinned."
Consciencely created flaws
fall on coffee-and-doughnut ears.
Leave?

-Eugene K. Buechele-

Its the Next Best Thing to Being There

Teacher Found Dead

Cincinnati--UPI--The body of John Kuntzman, 1847 Seymour Ave., was found by his landlord last night. He had been dead for several days. The coroner ruled suicide.

"IT'S THE NEXT BEST THING TO BEING THERE,"

the television entertained an empty room
as he lay half-listening
to the refrigerator compress itself
into frigidity.

Outside, hundreds of blinded windows stared aimlessly
forward.

Cars tired their way past
not knowing he was there.
Mountain grown bitterness sat cold
in a dime store cup.

The stove hissed sweetly
a nettled lullaby and seemed
to care. Four burners, freed
to speak their gaseous eulogy,
pampered his Orphean dream.
Plastic table cloth wrinkles pointed
to their creator's hand, fallen
languidly limp on linoleum squares
illuminated by a setting sun.
The world turned twice.
The landlord notified the police.

- Eugene K. Buechele-

Detroit, from the Lake

from the Lake
it was star-fire
the glowing
and the white red
and maybe flame
white flashes
spun blue in the dark
from the box shadows
above the red.

the deep
orange held
the flashes.

brack-sounds in the distance
followed the lights:
a Christmas
Independence
in the city
and somehow
the glow leaped
thick to flame--
more red
almost violet
in the dark.

The shrieking
came then
and the bracking
sounds sped
and shone
mostly at the base
of the glow.

Sirens and whipping
wails came spinning
out into the silence
of the Lake,
whipping
the moist whipping
sounds of MORE
MORE MORE MORE
MORE MORE MORE
MORE MORE MORE

rising and falling
and the streets
were somewhere
covered with water
but from out
on the black Lake
it didnt make
much difference.

And two staring
professors
could see it all,
I found out.

We were on the teak
planks and dreaming
about the black water
but they were awake,
their plastic suitcases
were packed full
and the tearing
of red and white hot
bullets below
spun the children
down into their own
bleeding and liquor
ran brown, scotch
and bourbon in the street
and the new shirts and shoes
and the shriek
of the Black victory
wailed above
the sirens, shrieked
and sputtered
and cried and ran
its colors
from rifle holes.

Then the soldiers
came and watched
the fire from the streets
and above the teachers
breathed easier
and they werent
burnt baby yet
and the soldiers
found they could die
too, die,

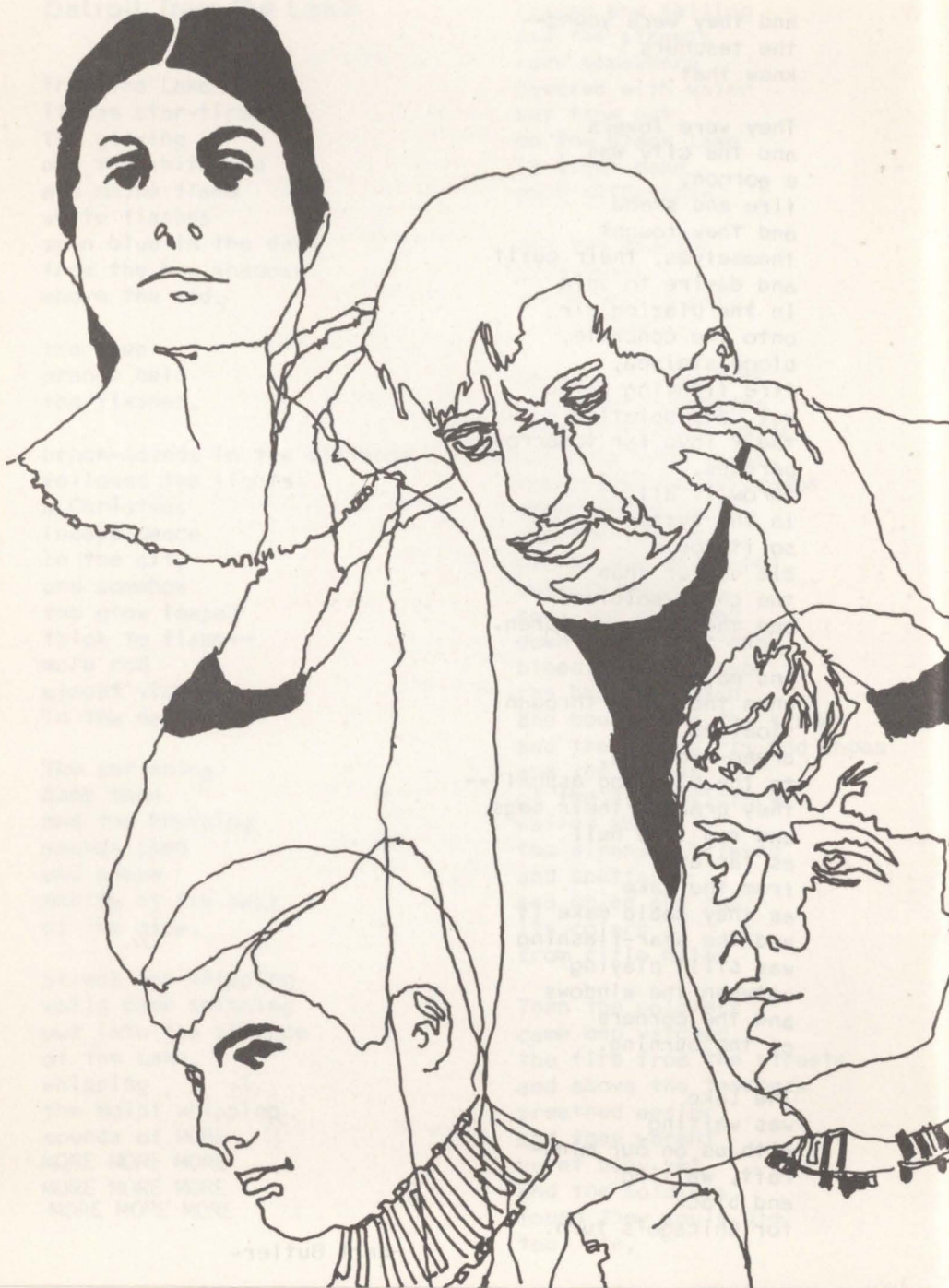
and they were young--
the teachers
knew that.

They were lovers
and the city was
a gorgon,
fire and stone
and they fought
themselves, their guilt
and desire to spin
in the blazing air
onto the concrete,
blood stained,
fire fighting water
wet, and splatter
their love for tomorrow,
perhaps,
throw it all
in the gutter
so it would
die easier than
the child soldiers
and the black children.

And maybe
when they were through
floating,
dream-floating,
to the bleeding asphalt--
they grabbed their bags
and ran like hell
as far away
from the Lake
as they could make it
and the star-flashing
was still playing
between the windows
and the corners
of the burning.

The Lake
was waiting
with us on our mind-
raft, waiting
and black
for Chicago's turn.

-Earl Butler-



Willie-Lee

The boy and girl stood barefoot in the blackberry thicket pulling the ripe berries off the sharp-sticking, thorny vines and eating them. The boy wore faded overalls without a shirt and the skin of his shoulders was red and blistered. He picked the berries quickly and stuffed them greedily into his mouth. The girl was smaller than the boy. Her white pinafore dress was berry-stained, with the pocket half-torn off, her hair tangled in pigtails with cockle-burrs sticking up in it like small horns. She picked the berries gingerly, wincing at each tear of a thorn on her fingers.

"Hell.OO..." The voice was slow and distinct. They turned. Sadie, the blue-black hound growled softly, the hair on the back of her neck bristled. Her tail was stiff and straight.

He stood with his big raw hands clasped in front of him, looking quizzically at the two children. He was not a boy and yet not quite a man. His large-boned frame was like that of a house or structure that has not been completed. His overalls were ragged and stiff with dirt and his bare feet were scratched from many thorns. He stared at them with the pleasant expectancy of a child.

The boy and girl stood and looked at the big, raw-boned stranger while the hound growled softly, deep in her throat. The boy spoke.

"Hey Mister, where'd you come from?" A smile split the idiot's face and he looked from one to the other, swinging his head back and forth on his neck like a door swinging on its hinges. His long brown hair was shaggy and uncut. The boy tried again.

"Say Mister, what's yore name?"

The voice came slowly and distinctly, as from a hard-to-recall memory. "My name...are...Willie-Lee."

The girl walked over and looked first at the idiot and then at her brother. With an impulsive yet shy gesture she held out a handful of berries. The idiot smiled and stuffed them into his mouth with one motion, the juice dribbling and running down his chin. The boy and girl looked at each other in open delight. The boy offered more berries and again the huge scooping motion and then stuffing them into his mouth. The idiot smiled with the berry juice running down his face. The boy and girl laughed and seeing them laugh the idiot laughed too. They laughed together like three children who shared a joke.

The boy sat down on a log to think and the girl sat on the grass hiking her dress up over her knees and showing her berry-stained panties. Presently the boy asked,

"You live aroun' here?"

"My name...are Willie-Lee..." The voice came slowly and distinctly as from a hard-to-recall memory.

The boy lost patience. "Heck, is that all you can say!" Then an inspiration. "I know...let's go down to the creek and play."

The boy and girl started off down the path hand-in-hand then turned to see Willie-Lee standing, looking after them with the foolish grin on his face. "Come on!" The boy gestured with his arm and seeing this Willie-Lee followed. The three of them came down to the creek and sat on the muddy bank and watched the dragon-flies spinning and lighting on the water. Suddenly the boy gave a whoop and jumped down into the water splashing. The mud made sucking sounds as it pulled at his feet. He knelt and picked up mud and made a mud ball and threw it at the girl and the idiot, and presently the three of them were splattering each other with wet balls of mud and laughing uncontrollably at the sight of their mud-splattered faces.

Tiring of this they walked down the bank of the creek and dug for turtle eggs, seeking the soft mounds of sand and digging with their fingers until they found the soft yellow balls. They collected the eggs into a huge, golden mound on the bank. The boy and girl sat on the sand and gloated over the golden treasure and counted it as Willie-Lee brought more of the yellow eggs and heaped them up until the pile was round and high as a small mountain. The three of them sat around awhile and looked at the pile and then got up and left it there.

The sun was setting as they climbed the slippery bank and their bodies were cool in the evening air. When they reached the path the boy turned. "We gotta go home. Ma'll be callin' us for supper." The boy and girl started up the path through the woods, but when they turned to wave goodbye, the idiot still stood. A frown puckered the boy's face. "Ain't you goin' home too?" He asked, waiting to hear the answer but not really expecting one.

For a long moment, the three of them stood like an etching in indecision with the sound of the crickets beginning and the air becoming cooler. Then the boy made a gesture. He motioned with his arm to the log. "You set right here. We'll bring you supper." There was an air of finality and rightness to his command. The idiot sat. A look of agreement passed between the two children.

They went up the path that led to their home, past the blackberry thicket and into the yard. Past the mulberry tree that held the tire swing, past the smokehouse. They entered the dusky kitchen, warm with the smell of beans and bacon fat, sat on the hard benches around the supper table and listened to the scolding from the tired mother as they ate their supper. When the family had eaten and the mother had turned to the stove for the hot dishwater, they sneaked some food and ran out the back door and down the path again. The moon had risen and gave light to their feet as they went. The idiot still sat on the log, patiently waiting, not

bothering to slap the mosquitos that fed on his feet and hands and face. They gave him the cold sweet potatoes and corn bread and he ate greedily, pushing it into his face like he had the berries. They sat on the grass and watched him eat and then went home.

That night while they lay on the quilt pallets on the floor they whispered an agreement with each other that Willie-Lee was the biggest secret they had ever shared.

The next morning they went back to the creek and expected him to be gone but he was still there, curled up by the log asleep. Sadie the hound sniffed and licked his face and the children laughed when he woke up. They played all day again with him, climbing trees and picking wild persimmons and chasing rabbits with the hound. They didn't go home until supper as it was their custom to do. Again they sneaked him food and the girl brought an old ragged quilt that was the hound's bed for him to sleep on. The next morning when they arrived Sadie was curled up asleep at his feet.

They played around the creek that day and followed it down aways and found a huge turtle that was as big as a dishpan. They were delighted to find such a prize. The idiot stood holding it with a grin on his face. The boy grew thoughtful and departed to return with an axe, its blade shining and sharp. He motioned for Willie-Lee to put the turtle on the ground and hold it there, then proceeded to cut off its tail. Willie-Lee watched curiously. The girl catching on to the game watched fascinated as the boy began to cut off the head and legs one at a time, waiting each time with unrelenting patience until the relaxing of the muscles would cause the parts of the turtle to emerge from its shell. After the tail was off and the blood flowed, Willie-Lee continued to stare at each dismemberment. Finally the parts were all off and lay quivering on the ground. The boy raised the axe with a look of glee and hacked the turtle's shell...cracking and splitting it with each stroke...the entrails and blood gushing out and spilling onto the sand. The boy and girl laughed and danced up and down. Willie-Lee looked at them and at the turtle. Then he smiled. They laughed again. Soon they were all three laughing and clapping their hands and dancing around the turtle. When they grew tired and sat on the bank and watched the flies begin to eat it.

That night when they sat at the supper table the mother made an announcement. "Mr. Wright came by today to warn us. Seems there's a crazy man loose...the Dempsey's son, Willie-Lee. They've kept him up...but seem's he got away from them. I want you children to be careful and don't play too far from the house."

The older daughter looked up from her plate, afraid, The older brother's wife reached a protective arm for her baby, wanting to shield it more as its father was away to war. The boy and girl

looked at each other with a dawn of realization on their faces. After supper they could hardly wait to sneak the food to Willie-Lee. As they sat on the log and watched him eat they told him he was a crazy man and was dangerous. He looked at them uncomprehendingly and stuffed the cold potatoes into his mouth.

The mother was greatly excited the next morning when she came from the mail-box, for a letter had come saying the older brother was coming home from the war. The household was thrown into an upheaval of cleaning and baking for his return. The boy and girl were sent to pick wild plums for pies but cautioned not to go farther than the creek. The boy managed to sneak the long-handled knife from behind the kitchen stove and they took the hound and Willie-Lee and went deep into the woods to chase rabbits. The hound rounded up one but it got away and they had to quit to pick plums.

They took the plums home and clumped them into the washtub, then went to the garden to pick tomatoes. Setting down their buckets, they took three tomatoes as large as muskmelons and ran to the creek to give to the idiot. He smashed them into his face one by one and stood dripping blood-red and smiling while they rolled in the grass until their stomachs were sore from laughter.

The next day the older brother came home. He got out of the car that he had hitched a ride with and stood by the mailbox. His duffle-bag was in one hand. He was leaning on a crutch. The left leg of his khaki pants was pinned neatly up at the knee. His brown hair curled from under the army cap and his eyes were those of a nineteen-year-old who has been to war and sees the world through pain-cracked images. His face was white under the freckles as he walked slowly up the path. The mother came around from back of the smoke house with sud-flaked arms where she had been bent over a washtub and put her wet arms around him and cried softly. The wife came proudly and shyly, showing the baby, crying and trying not to cry and the older brother put his free arm around each of them in turn and kissed the baby. His face was crumpled in happiness. The boy and girl hung about him in admiration while the older sister hurried to cut him a piece of plum pie.

The rest of the day was taken up in celebration. The mother spent the afternoon baking coon and sweet potatoes and the family sat down to the evening meal around a heavily-laden table. Their faces shone in the light of the coal-oil lamp.

That night the boy and girl listened, holding their breath for fear of being found awake, to the sound of their older brother making love to his wife. The sound of the bed-springs was a mystery to them and they were awed by it.

The next day they were again cautioned not to play far from the house. The mother told the older brother about the crazy man, Willie-Lee, and a look flickered in the brother's eyes.

The boy and girl did not want to go to the creek but hung about the house and played marbles. The older brother watched them affectionately in the back yard, leaning on his crutch and calling the game.

It was noontime and they were all in the house for dinner when Willie-Lee came to the house. He stood at the gate and called, "Hell..oo.." in a clear and distinct voice. The family looked up from the table. The mother went to the window while the older brother went to the door. Willie-Lee stood at the gate with a killed rabbit in one hand. It was dripping blood. In the other he held the shiny long knife. He looked at them in vague anticipation. He could have been two years old.

The older brother leaned in the doorway. "Who are you, Mister?"

"My name...are Willie-Lee." The answer came clear and distinct as from a hard-to-recall memory. The mother jumped in fear...ran about the house closing windows and the back door. The older brother's wife picked up the baby and held it to her.

"Give me the rifle, Ma." The older brother's voice was shaky. The mother reached down the Winchester rifle from behind the stove and handed it to him. The boy and girl sat at the dinner table and looked past their brother out the doorway at Willie-Lee standing at the gate with the foolish grin on his face. The rabbit dripped blood from one hand and the knife dripped blood from the other. The older brother raised the rifle to his shoulder and leaned on his crutch for support.

"Don't come any further, Mister. I'll have to shoot."

Sadie, the hound came around the corner of the house and sniffed at Willie-Lee's heels, wagging her tail. Willie-Lee walked slowly forward, the silly grin on his face, holding out the rabbit and knife. His footsteps made soft plopping sounds in the dust of the yard.

"I'm warning you, Mister...don't come any further..I'll shoot." The older brother's arm trembled as he aimed the rifle, holding it in the crook of his arm. Willie-Lee shuffled slowly forward, drips of blood falling into the dust of the yard. Sadie, the hound-dog whined.

"My name...are..." The blast of the rifle reverberated through the cabin. The idiot stopped. A look of surprise spread over his face. The knife and the rabbit slipped from his fingers and fell to the ground.

"Willie-Lee..." His voice trailed weakly off and he fell on his face in the dusty yard. The family came out of the house to look at him. The older sister went for a neighbor while the older brother leaned against the doorway. The boy and girl stood and looked at Willie-Lee lying in the dust. The rabbit's blood made a light stain as it mingled with the darker blood of Willie-Lee.

The neighbor came and brought the sheriff and they took Willie-Lee away and all that was left was a blood stain on the ground and the knife and the bloody rabbit. The older sister took the knife and rabbit into the kitchen and being a practical girl she skinned and cleaned the rabbit and rubbed salt into it to preserve it to be eaten. Then she washed the knife and put it away.

That night the yellow church bus came by and the family went to the regular Wednesday night prayer meeting. The boy and girl, dressed in fresh-starched and pressed clothes with faces shiny and clean, stood in the church and joined hands with the others and sang and felt their voices uplifted and strong and a sense of exhalation.

-Rachel Starosky-

Breathing the Fun it Was

We skipped rocks
Across the rapids
This afternoon

My hair caught in a twig
We laughed
He untangled me

The rocks were slim and cool
He could choose them better
Flatter
And they slid
Longer than mine

I slapped him
With a spray of evergreen
A teasing game

He smiled
Pulling me
Uphill

Sitting on a tree
That benched
From the cliff
We swung our legs
And smoked cigarettes.

-Ruth Stewart-



After Yeats in Late Autumn

Brown brush, lone thrush, a scarecrow, and a sky,
And every screaming twig, each pointing tree,
All lift and draw the backbone to the eye,
Then shut the lashes down upon me.

-Margaret Harrison-

Untitled

Brazen Autumn
Stepped out of her clothes
Into winter's frosty arms.

I took your hand
For the last time,
Knowing the promise of our passion
Would be frozen before spring.

It was worth the pain
Of frostbite.

-Ruth Stewart-

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